BOOKS

Reviews

Gender and civil society: Transcending boundaries. Edited by Jude HOWELL and Diane MULLIGAN. London, Routledge, 2005. xvii + 257 pp. Figures, tables, index. ISBN 0-415-33574-4.

This volume aims to launch a debate on gender and civil society since the two subjects have so far been studied separately – and extensively – but "have not encountered each other with greater force or depth. The failure to 'tango' cannot be blamed on either party", Howell argues, because "each has been busy with its own affairs". For example, some feminist researchers consider that civil society is not a significant analytic category and have focused more on the family and the public/private divide. At the same time, many civil society theorists and empirical researchers have preferred to explore civil society's relations with the State and, to a lesser extent, with the market. As a result, there is a gap – which this volume addresses – on a range of issues such as the "gendered" structure of civil society and what is described as the distinctiveness of women's organizing. Women are indeed significant actors within civil society around the world, and the publication aims to put the relationship between civil society and gender on the map.

The book's core chapters are divided into national case studies (on Chile, China, Indonesia, Mexico and the United States), regional overviews (of central and eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East), and a contribution entitled "Who is the real civil society? Women's groups versus pro-family groups at the international criminal court negotiations". The three underlying questions that the various contributors address are:

- How does the political environment and nature of the State shape the way women organize and the issues they address?
- What are the factors that affect women activists and their organizations' attempts to influence state policies on gender?
- To what extent are women's organizations similar to or different from other civil society organizations in terms of their impact, strategies and internal structures, and their relations with the State, other civil society organizations and each other?

On the first question, local, national and international political context obviously has an important bearing on the issues around which all civil society groups – including those of women – have organized and articulated their discourses. The move toward pluralism in many African countries has opened up a space for women's independent mobilization as opposed to the designated,

contained and controlled women's organizations which were embedded in dominating regimes or one-party systems. In the Middle East, many women's rights activists have invested much effort just in deciding how to make decisions. This is especially true in countries where no existing democratic models exist, and authoritarian and/or patriarchal political structures pose challenges to organizing.

In reply to the second question, about what affects the ability of women's organizations to influence state policies, several factors emerge from the case studies. For example, at least 30 per cent of female politicians and bureaucrats is the widely-accepted minimum "critical mass" required to mainstream gender significantly into policy and politics; however, as Jude Howell points out, "the presence of female politicians and bureaucrats does not guarantee that women's varied interests will be pursued in the corridors of power". Other critical factors include alliances between female civil-society activists and the State, strategizing by women's organizations around electoral and legislative cycles, and – as shown in the study on the United States – the relative importance of women's civil and political organizations for "their greater success in influencing policy" compared to caucuses and lobbying groups.

Finally, are women's organizations somehow "different"? The short answer based on the case studies seems to be: "Yes … and no". On the yes side, almost all of the contributions illustrate the considerable diversity of ways women organize – in their "institutional forms, ideological breadth, discourses women deploy and the issues they articulate", observes Jude Howell. Women's groups in sub-Saharan Africa, when compared with other civil society organizations, tend to be larger and more inclusive across ethnic, religious and regional lines. And women's groups can – and do – use traditionally assigned gender roles to build public sympathy and voice their demands. For example, in Indonesia women have deployed the "moral authority" of their role as mothers and carers when expressing dissent and protesting against high food prices. However, these "symbolic devices" can also be appropriated by others – as they have been in the Middle East where the claims of female activists have been undermined by some conservative Islamic clerics and national leftists as contrary to so-called authentic culture. On the "no" side of the answer to the question, several case studies "strike a note of caution in assuming that gender politics might lead women to organize their internal structures differently". For example, the chapter on China suggests that hierarchies and inequality in societal and political institutions tend to be reproduced within women's organizations.

It would have been helpful to define a few key terms when they are first used in the book to avoid reliance on the reader's assumptions or guesses, especially for the benefit of the international readership which will be interested in this publication. Such terms include "family", "civil society", "women's movement" and "feminists". It also would have been interesting to include reference to civil society groups which are promoting gender equality by addressing men and masculinities issues. The growing numbers of such groups – which may be made up mostly of men, or of men and women – are beginning to play a key part in bringing in the usually missing "male" side of the gender equation. For example, there are civil society groups, in rich and poor countries alike, which have been formed by men who use "responsible fatherhood" as the source of their moral authority and which promote gender equality. The White Ribbon Campaign in Canada is the world's largest effort by men to end domestic violence and improve

women's status; and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) has activities to educate boys and young men in the Caribbean about how they can halt risky behaviours and promote gender equality by questioning the way masculinities are defined and played out in their own societies.

Not only does this volume break new ground by launching a discussion on the interplay of gender with civil society, but it is also a fascinating collection of stories about women taking on all-powerful-and-all-present patriarchies – and questions for reflection by feminists, especially in the West. "If one of the negative impacts of Westernization and economic transformation", says Diane Mulligan in her case study on Indonesia, "is sexualized images of femininity in the media, and women are seen as symbols of the nation, it places women in a position that will always be contentious for either the nation or the religious institutions". The publication's pluralistic approach – combining contributions by economists, historians, development experts and civil society representatives – sets out an ambitious agenda of challenges by taking the first and most important step: starting a dialogue between feminists and civil society in order not only to strengthen the two areas, but also to help civil society fulfil its potential and – to quote Jude Howell – "serve as an emancipatory terrain for both men and women".

Adrienne Cruz
ILO Bureau for Gender Equality

The economics of work and family. Edited by Jean KIMMEL and Emily P. HOFFMAN. Kalamazoo, MI, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2002. vii + 190 pp. Bibliography, index. ISBN 0-88099-245-X.

Kids at work: The value of employer sponsored on-site child care centers. By Rachel CONNELLY, Deborah S. DEGRAFF and Rachel A. WILLIS. Kalamazoo, MI, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2004. ix + 174 pp. Bibliography, index. ISBN 0-88099-304-9.

Fighting for time: Shifting boundaries of work and social life. Edited by Cynthia FUCHS EPSTEIN and Arne KALLEBERG. New York, NY, Russell Sage Foundation, 2004. x + 354 pp. Index. ISBN 0-87154-286-2.

Telework and social change: How technology is reshaping the boundaries between home and work. By Nicole B. ELLISON. Oxford, Praeger, 2004. 169 pp. Bibliography, references. ISBN 0-275-97800-1.

Leaving welfare: Employment and well-being of the families that left welfare in the post-entitlement era. By Gregory ACS and Pamela LOPREST. Kalamazoo, MI, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2004. xiii + 131 pp. Bibliography, index. ISBN 0-88099-310-3.

Helping working families: The Earned Income Tax Credit. By Saul D. HOFFMANN and Laurence S. SEIDMAN. Kalamazoo, MI, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2003. xiii + 244 pp. Bibliography, index. ISBN 0-88099-254-9.

As rapid social, economic and demographic changes have unfolded in many countries around the world, there has been an increased need to reconsider

how the balance between work and family life should be addressed. Increased labour market participation by women, combined with greater demands made by organizations on their workforce in order to compete in the global market, have made commitment to work ever more important. At the same time, changing family structures and the decline of the traditional "male breadwinner" model have made the development of "family strategies" to address workers' home life an even greater concern. Increasingly aware of these circumstances, policy-makers are under great pressure to develop policies to address these often highly complex issues.

There are a number of mechanisms that help families develop their own strategies to reconcile work and family, and the books reviewed here offer a veritable buffet of policy options. Although it is useful to consider these options in isolation, as will be done below, policies developed at different levels – ranging from the national to the individual enterprise – are often combined by families seeking to meet their personal work and family needs. Thus, it is vital to consider the reconciliation of work and family life not only at a national level, but at all levels, using a variety of policy options.

The books under review focus on the concerns raised and policy options utilized in relation to the reconciliation of work and family life in the United States. While some may be put off by the fact that all of these books consider the problems and policy choices of a comparatively wealthy country, this should not divert attention from the real questions the authors address: what type of concerns influence policy options and what types of policies have been developed in response to help reconcile work and family life? Although the choice of policy options in the United States may not be universally suitable or applicable to the situation in other countries, understanding these options can help in the development of work and family policies tailored to national and local sensibilities and needs.

Of the six books, *The economics of work and family* – edited by Kimmel and Hoffman – addresses the broadest range of issues impacting on work and family life and, perhaps in line with the editors' intentions, it is also one of the most generally accessible books for policy-makers and researchers. The book comprises a broad compendium of papers based on a series of work-and-family seminars held at the Upjohn Institute in the United States. The themes addressed by the contributors include childcare policy, parents' working time, the implications of policy on fertility rates, the importance of family structures for labour market outcomes, and family leave policies. David Blau's chapter highlights the importance of enhancing child development as part of childcare policies as well as the need for uniform government action to rectify the problems of the childcare market. Access and income are central themes of the individual chapters authored by Barbara Bergmann and Katherin Ross Philips, with Bergmann stressing the value of access for low-income people to affordable and quality childcare, and Philips identifying the way imperfect access to family leave policies and legislation (in this case the United States' Family and Medical Leave Legislation) is often associated with the income level of the family in question. Cordelia Reimer's chapter summarizes the evolution over time of the manner in which parents divide their time between home and work, explaining that changes in work behaviour, family incomes and structure, and fertility rates have created challenges for the amount of parental time available to children. The chapters

authored by Susan Averett and Joyce Jacobson respectively consider family structure and fertility and ask whether there are any labour market outcomes associated with either factor. Averett's conclusion that policy can impact on decision-making with regard to fertility highlights the significance of national policy as a key component of family decision-making, while Jacobson's contention that policy intervention may be especially necessary to reduce negative financial outcomes associated with child raising, notably for low-income or deprived groups, merits further consideration by policy-makers.

While the Kimmel and Hoffman book addresses the broadest range of subjects relating to the development of work–family policies, the other texts under review scrutinize facets of these issues in greater detail. One of the concerns that often manifests itself in the public policy debates over what policies need to be developed for workers with family responsibilities is the nature and quality of care services. In particular, as identified above, the concern arises in relation to the childcare services available to workers with children. Childcare is without doubt one of the most important services in relation to reconciling work and family life, yet there is little agreement as to how it should be addressed and who should provide it. In some countries, such as those of northern Europe, the State plays an active role, whereas in other countries enterprises may provide some assistance or workers may simply be left to make their own arrangements. *Kids at work*, written by Connelly, DeGraff and Willis offers an interesting perspective on the issue of employer-provided childcare. The book examines the trends that are increasingly promoting consideration of this option, employing economic theory in order to understand why some firms choose to provide on-site childcare and others do not: what are the benefits to firms of on-site childcare facilities? The authors also attempt to estimate, both indirectly and directly, employee valuation of on-site facilities. The book concludes by examining United States Government policy regarding childcare funding and making recommendations to firms that are considering the provision of childcare arrangements, as well as to governments, which are urged to encourage on-site childcare services. The book makes a strong argument that employer-provided on-site childcare, with government policy support, can address availability, affordability and quality concerns relating to this form of care. Although what the authors suggest is true to a degree and offers a welcome alternative for many working parents with no other solution, the precondition of employment with a particular enterprise means that those who are not employed or not employed with an enterprise that offers such facilities may end up no better off, which is a concern not only for these parents and their children, but for society at large.

The other main source of concern for policy-makers in the work–family debate relates to work itself or, more specifically, working time. Working time analysis generally provides information regarding the length of the working day, working week, or the annual hours worked, which is crucial to understanding how long workers spend in the workplace away from their families. *Fighting for time*, edited by Epstein and Kalleberg, is an enlightening contribution to the growing analysis of and policy debate on working time issues. As the editors note in their introductory chapter, time differentiation is a basic component of the social structure and the cultural value system as it has evolved over time. In the not too distant past, daylight hours set the pace of a day, followed by ordering mechanisms (alarm clocks, factory whistles, etc.). But in many modern societies,

increasing concerns over longer working hours have led to problems in coping with family responsibilities, particularly as more family members (mainly women) now tend to participate in the paid labour market. Not only do the chapters of this book examine different aspects of time evaluation, time pressures, and time realities, but they probe even deeper to consider the implementation and creation of time norms in the United States. Time norms are part of the formal rule systems which govern people's everyday lives, but the manipulation of these norms has costs for both work and social life. The book offers a number of different analyses, but what unites these fascinating chapters are the unique and sometimes unconventional themes which are considered. Examples are the chapters by Jacobs and Gerson, proposing that longer working hours may not be as big a problem as the changes in the organization of work and family life by different groups of workers; by Stewart, analysing the commodification of time by bicycle messengers; and by Blair-Loy, suggesting that long hours may not always equate with overwork if the worker believes that work devotion will lead to a career reward in the form of advancement. On the whole, this salient and illuminating book highlights the growing need for policy-makers and researchers alike to re-evaluate what time means in their societies (especially in light of the impact of globalization) and should stimulate further theoretical work exploring the sociology of time.

Many people in policy-making, research, and the general public tend to confuse the issues of working time and work organization, which are by no means the same. While some variables of working time analysis are similar to those of work organization, they address different issues. Work organization analysis is concerned with how working hours are structured and provides valuable insights into how hours of work can impact on a worker's life and health. Examples of work organization include flexible work schedules (often called flexi-time), part-time work (in this case related to scheduling issues rather than to the working hours themselves), shift work, night work, and telework. It is in this vein that Ellison's *Telework and social change* makes its most useful contribution. It helpfully and clearly establishes the historical and theoretical background of telework and its usefulness as a method of work organization. For employers and policy-makers who view telework as an innovative tool to help reconcile work and family life, Ellison cogently identifies issues such as how it is used (whether a teleworker always works at home or does so periodically), trust between employer and worker, and the mental separation needed between work and personal life for teleworkers as essential factors requiring further reflection.

Finally, policies to reconcile work and family life often focus almost exclusively on workers in the paid labour market, with little attention to families with no one employed or living on state assistance. In many societies, those in the lower economic strata, particularly the long-term unemployed or the working poor, may need work-and-family policies more than others, yet they may not be able to access them readily. Two books address this problem. *Helping working families*, by Hoffman and Seidman, considers how tax provisions in the United States are used to provide financial relief to working parents, while *Leaving welfare* – by Acs and Loprest – considers the plight of unemployed people and their families when changes in government policy compel them to return to paid employment. Hoffmann and Seidman's thorough text examines the background and function of the Earned Income Tax Credit – a provision of the United States

Tax Code that grants working parents a percentage refund from their federal tax if they are married and have children. Hoffman and Seidman's analysis indicates that while this tax credit has been helpful to low-income families with working parents and children, it has not been as helpful to those beyond a certain income threshold. Besides, it imposes substantial "marriage penalties" against those who are unmarried and hurts larger families financially, while also having unnecessarily complex eligibility criteria.

Acs and Loprest's book examines the background to welfare reform in the United States and identifies some of the problems faced by people who must return to work after having lived on government assistance for extended periods of time. The book provides an honest assessment of the need for methodological changes in order to collect more accurate data on low-income groups. In the course of the authors' analysis, *Leaving welfare* identifies the problems faced by people attempting to return to work, including problems with securing and retaining employment and the question of how to make up for the lost family benefits received when they were living on government assistance. The availability and affordability of childcare is one of the central problems faced by workers who enter or re-enter the labour market and one of the main reasons some end up returning to unemployment. This book confirms the point made by Hoffman and Seidman that the Earned Income Tax Credit may be overly complex and may compel some workers to retreat into unemployment in order to address adequately their daily family needs. These books highlight the fact that policies intended to encourage the reconciliation of work and family life for everyone may not work so well for certain vulnerable groups. Consequently they emphasize the importance of developing alternative or additional work and family policies to help those in the poorer segments of society to escape poverty without sacrificing family needs.

While each of these six books can be recommended in its own right, it is important to note that some may be of particular interest to some readers as opposed to others. Kimmel and Hoffman's text is generally accessible and gives a good overview of the scope and variety of issues that need to be considered in the development and evaluation of work and family policies, which should be of interest to policy-makers and researchers alike. The same can be said of Connelly, DeGraff and Willis' examination of the childcare issue, though this book may also be of interest to employers and trade unions that are considering the establishment of on-site childcare facilities. Epstein and Kalleberg's highly readable and very informative book offers new theoretical reflections on time that will be of use to researchers in sociology, economics, business and management, as well as to policy-makers and labour organizations interested in the development of creative solutions to the problems associated with working time in society. Ellison's contribution will prove instructive for those seeking to understand the theoretical and methodological concerns surrounding telework, and it will be of interest primarily to researchers and policy-makers considering innovative approaches to work organization. Finally, the books by Hoffman and Seidman and Acs and Loprest offer comprehensive insights into how government policies can influence the work-and-family nexus, particularly for low-income families. Although these two books are thoroughly researched and well presented they are tied to very specific policies in the United States and, especially in the case of Hoffman and Seidman, highly technical concerns. Thus,

they may only be of relevance to those with a specific interest in tax law, social welfare systems and United States policies on work and family.

The issues associated with the struggle to reconcile work and family life are not unique to the United States, but are in fact universal causes for concern. The issues identified in these books, such as childcare policy, working time and work organization, are becoming serious concerns for countries undergoing rapid development as a result of globalization. Yet, in addressing these problems, many countries have chosen policy solutions in the nature of social experiments that are helpful for some, but not for others, such as tax credits for low-income workers. It is clear that the working poor and those who are unemployed are put in the virtually untenable position of having to decide explicitly between working and discharging their family responsibilities without support. As a method of assisting people out of poverty, work and family policies clearly deserve closer scrutiny and more careful consideration. Finally, in order for work and family policies to be effective and functional in meeting the different and changing needs of families in society, a range of policies from the national to the local levels needs to be developed in a coordinated fashion so as to ensure that all members of society can benefit from them.

Naj Ghosheh Jr.
ILO Conditions of Work and Employment Programme

The scientific reproduction of gender inequality: A discourse analysis of research texts on women's entrepreneurship. By Helene AHL. Stockhom, Liber/Copenhagen, Copenhagen Business School Press/Oslo, Abstrakt Forlag, 2004. 235 pp. ISBN 91-47-07424-8 (Sweden). ISBN 87-630-0123-3 (all other countries).

The title is something of a jaw-breaker. Definitely an academic text. Had I not seen the words "women's entrepreneurship" in the title, I would probably have passed up on the opportunity to review this gem of a book. Where to start? Perhaps with a few comments on gender equality and its practical implications for many women who try to start and grow their own enterprises.

The view persists in many quarters that laws, regulations and programmes are fair in themselves, in so far as they apply equally to both women and men. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence is often used in attempts to illustrate gender equality in practice. "My wife's sister is a very successful entrepreneur" … therefore the business environment does not discriminate against women. Liberia has a woman as President … therefore gender equality exists in Liberia. However, the reality in most countries – and developing countries in particular – is rather different. For example, the African Development Bank and the World Bank/ International Finance Corporation have done an admirable job in documenting the extent of discrimination facing women – and female entrepreneurs in particular – in Uganda.[1]

---

[1] See African Development Bank: *Uganda: Multi-sector country gender profile*, Abidjan, 2005; *Onar, Uganda: Agricultural and rural development northeast and south region*, Abidjan, 2005, Jan. See also Foreign Investment Advisory Service of the International Finance Corporation (FIAS/IFC) and Gender-Entrepreneurship-Markets Unit: *Gender and growth assessment (GGA) for Uganda*, Washington, DC, IFC, 2005 (May).

The ILO created a number of InFocus Programmes in 1999, and each of these was charged with adopting a three-pronged strategy: developing a knowledge base; advocating for change; and providing support services and tools. The InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment through Small Enterprise Development (IFP/SEED) systematically applied these strategies to good effect. The SEED team working on Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) has produced a large number of documents and reports on the situation of women entrepreneurs, and these are of both general and country-specific interest.[2] The resulting knowledge base has made the ILO's web pages on "women's entrepreneurship" among the most frequently visited. This enhanced knowledge base has indeed proved to be a powerful tool in shedding light on otherwise unknown or under-researched areas, in debunking much of the rhetoric and myth surrounding women in business, and most importantly in informing the ILO's supportive actions.

"Why special support for women?", is a question that is often asked. The focus on women is aimed at redressing the equality gaps and lack of attention given by other small enterprise programmes to the needs and circumstances of women entrepreneurs. However, throughout the ILO's WEDGE work it has become apparent that the task of ending discrimination facing women entrepreneurs is a difficult one. It is all too easy to look at women-owned small businesses and compare their economic performance to those owned by men, and in the process ignore many of the underlying barriers, constraints and disadvantages that women experience in business. The majority of researchers and academics have been trained and graduated through schools that are at best gender blind. The favoured research processes and instruments are largely based on male-constructed models and methodologies. The ILO's continuing work in this field has sometimes been frustrated by the researchers and consultants who have been engaged, and who promote this male-constructed economic view of the business world – sometimes unwittingly.

In this context, the work of Ms Ahl is a reassuring breath of fresh air. Here is a committed academic who thoroughly and systematically immersed herself in state-of-the-art research papers and texts in the field of entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on women's entrepreneurship. Not only has she reviewed and assessed a vast number of refereed research papers, but she also demonstrates her skills as a sleuth by investigating the journals themselves: their editorial boards, their reviewing processes and their panels of referees. What emerges is as stark as the discriminatory factors facing female entrepreneurs in Uganda, as documented by the African Development Bank and the IFC. The main actors (editorial board and reviewers) are predominantly men, they are from North America and Europe, and a significant number of them appear in more than one editorial board or review panel. In this way, Ahl's text does to the research world what Mayoux's earlier work has done to the policy environment.[3] To her credit, Ahl does not apologize for her approach and the nature of her enquiry, which is

---

[2] See, for example, Linda Mayoux: *Jobs, gender and small enterprises: Getting the policy environment right*, SEED Working Paper No. 15, Geneva, ILO, 2001. Gerard Finnegan, Rhona Howarth and Patricia Richardson: *The challenges of growing small businesses: Insights from women entrepreneurs in Africa,* SEED Working Paper No. 47, Geneva, ILO, 2005.

[3] See note 2 above.

"to analyze the discursive construction of the female entrepreneur/female entrepreneurship in research texts from a feminist theory perspective" (p. 35).

Helene Ahl provides a bird's-eye view of how economists (physiocrats, classical and neo-classical thinkers) have dealt with the topic of entrepreneurship, and takes in a review of "the entrepreneur in management research on entrepreneurship" (p. 45). To summarize her findings, the economists and management researchers – who are predominantly men – see "entrepreneurship … as a male gendered construct". In her systematic deconstruction of terms such as "entrepreneurship" and "entrepreneur", it is evident that the original use of these words assumed that men were the focus of both. By taking the accepted definitions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur, and comparing their respective opposites, one finds strong links between conventional masculine attributes and the accepted definitions, and many similarities between feminine attributes and the "opposites". Thus, the accepted definitions have been constructed largely with male entrepreneurs in mind, and female entrepreneurs are expected to match up to the corresponding criteria.

Ahl goes on to match the definitions to Sandra Bem's sex-role inventory, which "captures what Americans, both men and women, generally considered typical masculine and feminine traits" (p. 55). Not surprisingly, based on Bem's scales Ahl shows strong similarities between "Masculinity words compared to Entrepreneur words", and "Femininity words compared to opposites of Entrepreneur words". Her analysis shows that "entrepreneurship" is not gender neutral, but rather that entrepreneurship in the economic literature is "male gendered". As Ahl indicates, "[b]eing a woman and an entrepreneur at the same time means that one has to position oneself simultaneously in regard to two conflicting discourses" (p. 61).

Ahl recognizes that very few of the researchers take any account of equality issues. The majority of the texts position women as a "problem" in relation to entrepreneurship and enterprise performance. "Either they do not do it right, or they are not right" (p. 142). However, "[w]hat is 'right' can be seen as male gendered: pursuing growth, size, profit and selecting high tech or manufacturing industries where this is more likely to be achieved than in service or retail" (where women are dominant).

Ahl's Chapter 7 reflects on how the reviewed articles "construct work and family". Most of the reviewed studies embody an implicit understanding that there is a public sphere and a private sphere which are separate from each other, with work belonging to the former and home, family and children to the latter. What is classified as "private" is also seen as an individual responsibility and not a collective one. There is also a gendering of the two spheres. Men's place in the public sphere is unquestioned. It is the woman who is expected to adapt to her husband's fixed schedule. Caring for small children is regarded as the woman's responsibility. The studies do not ask men how they are able to combine entrepreneurship and childcare. Women's entrepreneurship is then positioned as a difficult challenge since it is hard to do both jobs, or as an opportunity, i.e. family and work can be combined since entrepreneurship may allow more flexible hours. The availability of and access to public childcare is not discussed at all. Few studies question the double burdens put on women. Few studies question men's privileged status and women's subordinate position. Women's difficulties are seen as shortcomings *they* should do something about. Indeed, institutional

arrangements – or the lack of them – are not questioned, instead women are typically advised to adapt by changing themselves (p. 159).

Throughout, Helene Ahl makes a strong and convincing case for the need to look at women's entrepreneurship through an equality lens. It is society and the institutions that comprise it that need to reassess the support that is provided for women to pursue entrepreneurship on an equal footing with men. Academic and research institutions, with their predominant male gendered concepts, need to stop thinking of female entrepreneurs as secondary figures in their field.

Besides, not all women are the same, and not all entrepreneurs are the same. There is indeed a wide spectrum of female entrepreneurs ranging from those involved in "necessity" and survival enterprises, to those who operate in high-growth and export markets. A range of different criteria and benchmarks therefore needs to be established in order to take account of the goals and aspirations of the women themselves and of the institutional barriers and constraints they face. These could then be applied alongside economic and financial performance criteria. The ILO's WEDGE team has been working closely with organizations such as Development Cooperation Ireland and the African Development Bank to develop a repertoire of approaches aimed at assisting women entrepreneurs at different levels and different stages of development.[4] In addition, the WEDGE team's research approach constantly reflects the quest for more appropriate and pro-women techniques that can adequately assess women's performance as entrepreneurs.

Ahl's text will certainly assist in the search for a more gender-sensitive approach to researching women's entrepreneurship. Indeed, highlighting as it does the pitfalls and inbuilt biases of the standard research methodologies, it should be compulsory reading for any researchers engaging in the field of entrepreneurship in general, as well as for those with a specific interest in women's entrepreneurship.

Gerry Finnegan
ILO InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment
through Small Enterprise Development

New ILO publications

América Latina: Negociación colectiva y equidad de género.
Edited by Laís ABRAMO and Marta RANGEL. Santiago de Chile, 2005.
334 pp. Tables, figures, bibliography. 35 Swiss francs. ISBN 92-2-317251-9.

This book is the fruit of research undertaken by the ILO for a novel purpose: evaluating the real progress achieved in working women's rights and

---

[4] For example, "Gender and Entrepreneurship Together: GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise" aims to assist survivalist women entrepreneurs, and the "Assessment Framework for Growth-Oriented Women Entrepreneurs" targets high-growth female entrepreneurship with export potential.

pinpointing the clauses on equality of opportunity contained in collective agreements reached in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The main conclusion is that gender issues are addressed in many collective agreements in those six Latin American countries, even though the region lags far behind Europe, Canada and the United States in this sphere. Of the clauses noted and analysed, some 55 per cent establish obligations stricter than those contained in the labour legislation of the country in question; the remaining 45 per cent reaffirm pre-existing norms. Important progress has been achieved, notably in the following areas: extension of the period of maternity leave and introduction of paternity leave; extension of the time during which an expectant or breast-feeding mother is protected against redundancy; guaranteed full wage during maternity leave; help with childcare; and equal pay for work of equal value.

In the first chapter, the editors, Laís Abramo and Marta Rangel, provide a comparative analysis of the situation in the six countries studied. In the next chapter, Mariluz Vega examines the relationship between the right to collective bargaining and the right to equality. Subsequent chapters contain national analyses of the six countries studied and further, comprehensive information on this subject.

Employers' organizations taking the lead on gender equality: Case studies from 10 countries. Geneva, 2005. v + 85 pp. Tables. 25 Swiss francs.
ISBN 92-2-117277-5.

Many employers worldwide have contributed to the attainment of higher levels of equality between men and women at work. The case studies presented here provide insights into the efforts being made by employers and their organizations in countries across the world. The gender equality issues that employers' organizations address vary considerably from country to country. There is, however, a common thread which emerges from analysis of the case studies – namely that, when employers act together through their representative organizations, they can influence reform in a way that is beneficial both to themselves and to society as a whole, rather than having it imposed upon them.

This informative guide offers examples of the initiatives taken by employers' organizations. Its purpose is to stimulate reflection and inspire others to follow.

Gender equality and decent work: Good practices at the workplace.
Geneva, 2005. ix + 121 pp. Boxes, bibliography, annex. 25 Swiss francs.
ISBN 92-2-116991-X.

Drawing on the practices and experiences of 25 countries, this book shows how governments, employers' organizations and trade unions around the world bring gender equality into their institutional structures, policies, programmes and activities.

Examples of good practices are arranged into eight thematic categories such as the use of sex-disaggregated data; strategic partnerships; multi-sectoral approaches in legislation, policies and strategies; and strategically placed gender expertise. Designed to stimulate fresh ideas and invite adaptation, the book provides step-by-step outlines of the actions undertaken to make the various aspects of good gender practice visible and comparable, thereby making it easier for readers to identify those aspects most relevant to their own situations.